

Environmental report is ordered on Sunny Cove storm-drain pipe

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SANTA CRUZ — County supervisors Tuesday upheld a recent Planning Commission decision to require an environmental impact report on proposed modifications to the controversial storm-drain pipe at Live Oak's Sunny Cove Beach.

Declining to review the commission's decision, supervisors referred the matter to county Environmental Coordinator Sue Williamson, directing her to return to the board with a work outline for the study no later than Oct. 22.

Williamson had declared in July that no EIR was needed on the proposed modifications.

In the meantime, according to Phil Sanfilippo, assistant director of engineering for the county Public Works Department, the pipe, which was built to carry storm runoff from the Volunteers of America seniors low-income housing project and the 4C's condominium development on 17th Avenue, will remain closed. Sanfilippo said today that a temporary plan to handle the projects' runoff from the coming winter rains is being drafted by the condominium

developer. That plan is to be submitted to public works within the next week or so, he said.

The state Coastal Commission ordered the pipe at Sunny Cove closed last winter after runoff from a small storm scoured a 40-foot-wide, four-foot-deep trench across the beach in January. The drainage system had been installed the previous month on privately owned Johans Beach without the beach owner's knowledge or Coastal Commission approval.

Following a study of the situation, supervisors voted in April to go ahead with a \$90,000 plan to modify the system. The proposal, the

cheapest of six presented to the board, called for the diversion of storm runoff to nearby Bonita Lagoon. Excess runoff was to empty onto the beach as the lagoon filled up, passing first through a silt and grease trap, and rip rap.

Williamson approved the plan in July, saying it would have no harmful effect on the environment. But Sunny Cove area residents complained that the proposed changes would threaten homes on Blackpoint Lane and still pose a threat to the beach itself. They appealed Williamson's decision to the Planning Commission, demanding an environmental study on the project.

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